

A Page of Short Stories

HUSHING HATHOR



WEAVER will stir them up," said Bray confidently as he glanced through the open door of the stateroom of sleeper.

"I hope he dies," groaned Beverly. "Of all the personally conducted funerals I ever attended this is about the worst. It's really affecting the performance. They are not giving half as good a show as they should. Look at that."

He waved his cigar and Bray glanced in the direction indicated. Chalmers, the clown of the comedy acrobatic team, had stopped to speak to Lil Hathor, sitting lonesomely in her section of the special taken by the Great Oceanic Vaudeville Company. Before he could sink into the seat beside her Tom Hathor had slipped into it.

Bray smiled. No mother guarding her debutante daughter from an ineligible half so active as a man of the Hathor type, who realized that should his daughter marry, his term of "management" would end and he would have to go to work or train some apprentice.

Chalmers glared into the oily face smirking complacently into his own and went over into a corner seat and snored.

"The Oceanic" was a touring vaudeville company playing in the regular vaudeville houses when the shattering terms were sufficient, but for the greater part appearing in the dramatic houses in the two or three-night stands.

Already they had been out some seven weeks and Beverly from the first had realized that unless something could be done to enliven the company the tour would not be a success. The 29 odd members of the organization were less friendly than they had been the night they had left Jersey City.

Chalmers' efforts to win the friendship of the Hathors had been the only evidence of a desire to be companionable, and Hathor, perceiving in his daughter's manner a willingness to return the young clown's liking, had hastened to interpose.

In the theater he mounted guard at her dressing room door, escorting her to and from the stage and at the hotels he locked her hall door and forced her to pass through his own room, which adjoined. He was her constant companion on the street and Chalmers' courtship had performed its duty in the sign language, silently but effectively.

Bray smiled as he observed the maneuvering and nodded vigorously.

"You won't know the car when Weaver comes," he said briskly. "As soon as you wrote what the trouble was I thought of John. A grouchy company never gives a slightly show but—well, wait for Weaver."

Weaver was to join them in the next town. The business manager had scarcely stepped to the station platform when he was met by an un-

desized little man with twinkling blue eyes set in an absolutely expressionless face.

"You manage this troupe of play-actors?" demanded the newcomer.

Beverly nodded.

"Well, I am the manager of the elephant act that was to join you here."

"Elephants?" exclaimed Beverly. "I am not expecting any elephant act here."

"There's my car," retorted the newcomer, pointing across the station to a gaudily painted special car on a siding. "It's play or pay."

Beverly gasped. He knew the Thompson elephant act. Eight hundred dollars added to the salary roll would reduce the profits almost to nothing. There had been a mistake somewhere.

He was still mopping his perspiring brow when Bray came out on the platform. His face lighted up as he saw the two men on the station.

"How are you, John?" he greeted. "Know Mr. Beverly already?"

"And you're Weaver, and not the elephant man?" gasped Beverly in relief. Weaver grinned.

"Thompson's as black as his most brunette elephant," he explained. "The car is here waiting to be moved and I thought I would give you a scare."

Bray overheard and came down the steps grinning. "I told you that John would stir things up," he exclaimed. "He caught you first trip out. By Saturday you won't know the company."

Bray was right. Before the end of the week the ice had melted. The company remained for the entire week in the town and Weaver was the moving spirit in the morning excursions. Already an added smartness was apparent in the performance, and if Lil Hathor's eyes were tear-redened there was a certain dash in her act that had been lacking before, for Weaver defied her father and chatted with her by the hour.

Hathor was the only one in the show who hated the little comedian, but he had ample cause for hatred. Weaver knew the type he represented and heartily disliked men who made slaves of their children.

Already he knew that Chalmers loved Lil, and that his love was returned. It was Weaver's promise that all should come out right that cheered the girl, for beneath the surface Weaver was a man fertile in resources and appreciative of the gravity of things.

On Friday the "call" went up on the board. The company learned that the next week was to be put in with single performances in six different towns, and through long experience they dreaded the "one-nighters," knowing that the hotels would be bad and the theaters mere renamed town halls with no dressing room accommodations.

They were to play over a branch line for the first three nights and then make a long jump along the

main line.

"That long jump is going to be a peach," observed Weaver as he paused in front of the time schedule. "It's had enough to get up at 6 o'clock every morning for a week, but Thursday we get two layoffs. That one at Waynesville is a two-hour stop in a dinky junction town."

"And no cafes?" wailed Hathor. "You'll have to carry it in a bottle," advised Weaver. "Don't you

Then the through train had picked them up and things had been a little better, but everyone was inclined to be ill-tempered and Weaver vainly sought to rally them.

Waynesville was reached early in the afternoon and their car was run onto a siding. They had all dropped off at the station for something to eat, and after exhausting the possibilities of the station restaurant they lined up along the platform, debating whether they should head for their car, now lying half a mile down the yard, or have a look at the town.

A passing freight decided the question for them, for a bundle of laths jolted from a car and scattered over the platform almost at their feet.

Weaver caught up one of the long sticks and held it sword fashion.

"Fall in," he commanded. "We are going to parade."

"I go back to the car," declared Hathor. "Come, Lil!"

"You fall in," commanded Weaver, handing a stick to Peavey, the

care! You'll have a good time. Something tells me you will."

Weaver walked away. He did not like to be near Hathor any more than he could help. He ran into Chalmers, sitting quietly in a corner, and took him off to cheer him up.

Thursday morning, even Weaver found it difficult to put life in the crowd. They had boarded their sleepers directly after the performance, but there had been a lay-over at the point where the branch joined the main road and the passing engines had murdered sleep.

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"I shall not," said Hathor angrily. "Come, Lil!"

There was a swish and Weaver's lath fell with a sharp sound against Hathor's fat legs. Almost instantly Peavey followed suit and before the stick was raised Weaver's lath fell again, this time with greater force.

The others had laughingly fallen into line and with a stream of mut-

Lil when you get there. I'll look after the old man. You don't need any license in this state."

Weaver dashed on down the line, not pausing even for the nod of understanding and a few minutes later the company marched down the platform and wheeled into the road, lustily yelling the popular song of the moment.

Hathor uneasily turned his head half a dozen times to make certain that his daughter followed, but as each infraction of discipline was accompanied by a sharp rap from Weaver's lath, his inspections became less frequent.

Peavey, just behind Weaver, was amply seconding his leader's efforts and Hathor affected tight clothing that did not conduce to his comfort when discipline was applied.

At last the perspiring Hathor halted and gazed despairingly about him. Neither Lil nor Chalmers were to be seen.

"I must find my daughter," he cried.

"Isn't Miss Hathor in line?" demanded Weaver with well-affected astonishment. "She is a deserter. When we find her we shall shoot her."

"She has gone with that Chalmers," wailed Hathor.

"Don't worry, we'll shoot them both," promised Weaver soothingly. "Forward, march!"

"But I must find her," wailed Hathor.

"We're going to look for her," explained Weaver. "Forward, march!"

Hathor faced about.

"I go back," he said stubbornly. "Insubordination!" shouted Weaver. "Men, this must be punished or we shall have him deserting, too."

The lath fell and Hathor, emitting a howl, started forward in the direction of the church spire, guessing the probable errand of the pair.

"Come back," called Weaver, but Hathor kept on. Weaver quietly reversed his lath. Three tacks, obtained from the baggage-master, had been driven into this end and as the lath fell again Hathor leaped into the air with a howl stronger than those he had before given vent to.

"You stabbed me," he cried, advancing toward the comedian.

"Thus we deal with traitors," declared Weaver, with a funny burlesque of a tragedian that convulsed the others. "Get into line!"

"I shall not," sputtered Hathor. "I will find my girl and kill her and then I shall come back and kill you."

"You hear that?" demanded Weaver. "He defies his superior officer. Guards, arrest him!"

Hathor was too fat to fight and after a few ineffectual struggles he lay on the lawn beside the walk while Peavey and two of the others sat upon his huge bulk to insure quietude.

"This is a serious breach of discipline," said Weaver, as he stood over the prostrate victim. "It is attempted desertion in the face of the enemy."

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We are about to capture the cakeshop yonder and you basely try to desert. For this death should be the penalty, but I shall be merciful. If I let you up you will promise never to do it again." Peavey let go of his throat so he can answer.

The answer was a burst of profanity that sent the women out of earshot, but the vituperation did not affect Weaver, who sadly regarded the excitable man and made a sign to Peavey to choke off the trade.

"I shall not take action on this at the moment," he said. "I know that you will be sorry for what you have done and I shall be forgiving. All great generals are magnanimous. I shall call a court-martial at once and abide by its decision."

He motioned the company to approach and briefly explained that he had decided upon an immediate trial.

"I may as well tell you before-hand," he explained seriously, "that I shall sentence him to be shot, but shall be moved by the tears of the victim's daughter and commute the sentence to treating the crowd, but first of all we must have a legal trial."

Most of the men had served their apprenticeship in some burlesque companies, and while the women sat about on the grass and shrieked with laughter Weaver and the men adapted an old afterpiece to the exigencies of the case, to the great approval of a rapidly increasing audience of town-folks.

Weaver had taken his stand where he could command a view of the street and at last heaped a sigh of relief as he saw the two runaways emerge from the paragon grounds, waving their marriage certificates above their heads.

"Enough," exclaimed Weaver. "Let us have no more of this. I sentence the prisoner to be the father-in-law of Jack Chalmers and to blow the crowd to a wedding breakfast at the bakers across the street and we're all going to kiss the bride," he added, as the runaways came up. He set the example by claiming the first kiss.

Hathor, released from his uncomfortable position, rose slowly to his feet. For an instant he seemed to contemplate a rush upon Weaver, but the little comedian held his lath with the tack end ready and the others looked as though they, too, were prepared for an onslaught.

For a minute he glanced about him helplessly, then he turned and kissed Lil.

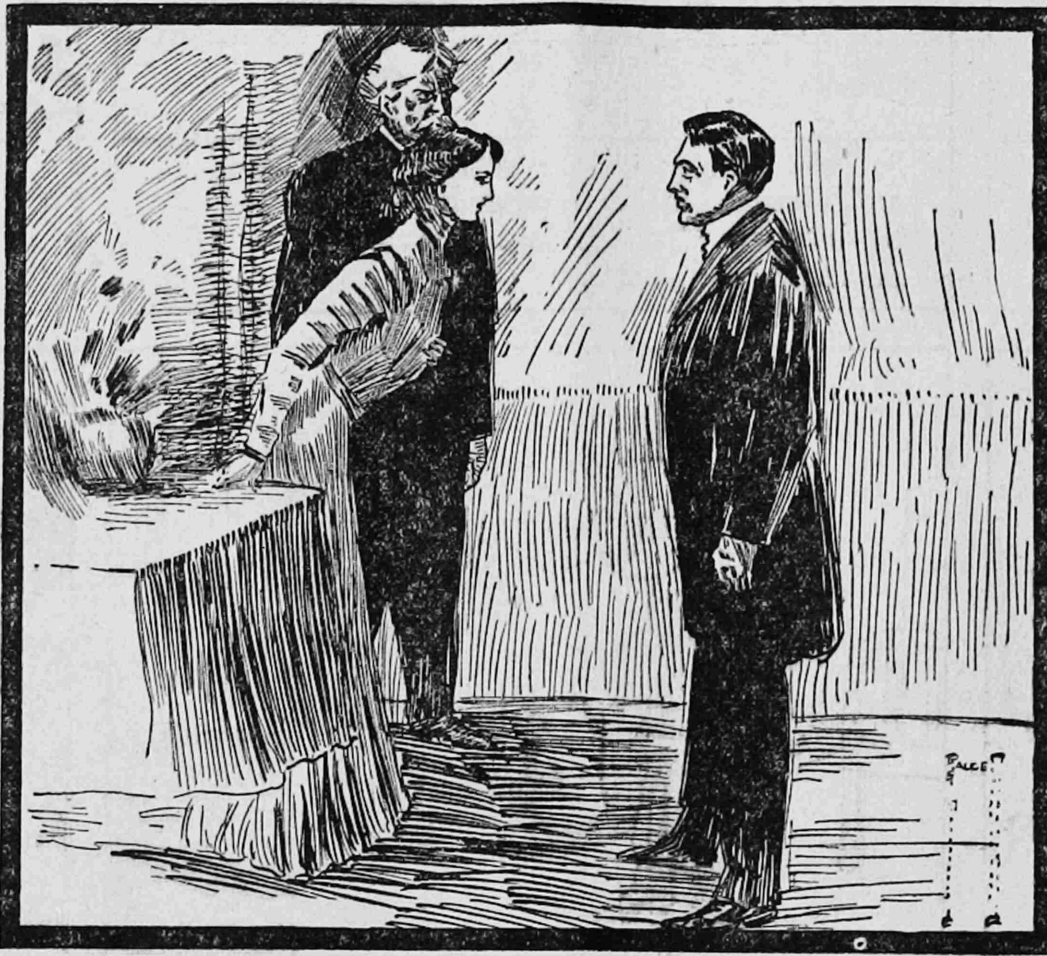
"Come on," he said, as he lumbered in the direction of the bakery.

Back in the car, an hour later, they told the tale with cheers and laughs to Beverly, working in the stateroom over his books. A smile crossed the manager's face.

"Mr. Bray said you would live things up when you came, he smiled at Weaver. "I'm glad you came."

"Me too," said the new Mrs. Chalmers. "I think he's a dear."

They looked to see what Hathor thought, but the fat father was on the rear platform confiding his opinion to the scenery as it slipped past.



WEAVER DEFIED HER FATHER AND CHATTED WITH HER BY THE HOUR.

LAUGH THE WORLD LAUGHS WITH YOU



The Two Husbands.

ONCE there were two women who got married. And the husband of the first woman was immensely popular with all her friends. When ever they were out at dinner he was the life of the party and all the other women rather envied her having such a congenial husband.

Only Conveyance at Hand.

Little Eva—"I wonder why Wash-

The husband of the other woman was a failure as a social light. He could not talk to other women and he always trotted right along beside his wife, dutifully. All the other women envied her having a husband who was so devoted to her.

But the first woman was not satisfied with her husband, because the rest of the women found him so agreeable.

And the second woman was dissatisfied with her husband because he seemed unable to hold his own in a social gathering.

This teaches us—No, it doesn't. It simply leaves the poor husbands up in the air as usual.

ington took a hack at the cherry tree?"

"Little Bob—" I reckon there wasn't any taxicab in sight."

The Rising Man.

Gyer—"There goes a young man who invariably rises to the occasion."

Gyer—"Indeed?"

Gyer—"Fast, he's an elevator chauffeur."

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